

Message Text

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DRAFTED BY: S/S-O: S.W. WORREL

APPROVED BY: S/S-O: R.M. WRIGHT

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY NAIROBI

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 188844

TOSHU 20 TOECO 16

FOLLOWING REPEAT MOSCOW 11479 SENT ACTION SECSTATE USIA SALT TWO
BELGRADE BERLIN BUDAPEST GENEVA NATO PRAGUE SOFIA WARSAW BUCHAREST
SEPT. 21:

QUOTE

C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 11479

E.O. 11652: XGDS

TAGS: PFOR, PINT, UR, US

SUBJ: DISSIDENCE AND DETENTE: BREZHNEV'S DILEMMA

1. SUMMARY: EMBASSY DOES NOT AGREE WITH CURRENT
SPECULATION THAT BREZHNEV AND HIS POLICIES ARE IN
IMMEDIATE TROUBLE. BUT WE DO BELIEVE HE IS FACED WITH
DANGER OF BEING WHIP-SAWED BETWEEN FOREIGN POLICY AND
INTERNAL INTERESTS OVER ISSUES OF DISSIDENCE AND
EXPANDED CONTACTS AND INFORMATION. WHILE DANGERS OF
INTERNAL DISTURBANCE MAY NOT SEEM GREAT IN WESTERN
EYES, PERCEPTIONS OF SOVIET LEADERS MAY BE DIFFERENT.
ANY WESTERN ATTEMPTS TO CONDITION DETENTE ON INTERNAL
RELAXATION THUS TEND TO REINFORCE OLD REFLEXES AND PUT
THE PRESSURE ON BREZHNEV TO DIG IN HIS HEELS WITH FI-
NALITY. THAT HE HAS NOT YET DONE SO -- AND HAS IN FACT
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ENDED JAMMING AND TONED DOWN THE ANTI-SAKHAROV CAMPAIGN --
IS TESTIMONY TO HIS APPRECIATION OF THE HIGH STAKES HE
HAS PLACED ON THE RELATIONSHIP WITH THE U.S. IT ALSO
ILLUSTRATES DEGREE OF CONTROL WHICH HE AND HIS PRO-

DETENTE FOLLOWERS STILL WIELD IN THIS REGIME.

2. IN THE EMBASSY'S JUDGMENT, THEREFORE, WE ARE IN A DELICATE PERIOD. DESPITE THE LOGIC BEHIND DETENTE, AND DESPITE BREZHNEV'S COMMITMENT, A CLEAR-CUT FAILURE ON MFN OR A BREAKDOWN ON CSCE STEMMING FROM WESTERN PRE-OCCUPATION ABOUT SOVIET INTERNAL AFFAIRS COULD START A DOWNWARD PSYCHOLOGICAL SPIRAL BACK TOWARD ATTITUDES REMINISCENT OF THE COLD WAR PERIOD. IN POLICY TERMS, CONTINUED VIGOROUS ADMINISTRATION EFFORTS ON BEHALF OF MFN, AS WELL AS SUPPORT FOR TRADE EXPANSION AND CREDIT ACTIVITIES, ARE OBVIOUSLY ESSENTIAL AT THIS JUNCTURE. ENERGETIC FOLLOW-THROUGH ON VARIOUS BILATERAL AGREEMENTS IS LIKEWISE IMPORTANT IN FIELD OF EXPANDING CONTACTS, A RELAXATION OF U.S. POLICY ON TRADE UNION VISITS WOULD BE REGARDED AS A SIGNIFICANT POSITIVE SIGNAL IN MOSCOW. AND CURRENT WASHINGTON ATTENTION TO VOA PROGRAMMING IS HIGHLY DESIRABLE. END SUMMARY.

3. CROSS CURRENT IN THE HANDLING OF DISSIDENCE AND ON THE ISSUE OF CONTACTS AND EXCHANGE OF INFORMATION WITH THE WEST HAVE LED TO A RESURGENCE OF SPECULATION THAT BREZHNEV AND HIS DETENTE POLICY ARE IN TROUBLE. THE EMBASSY IS SKEPTICAL THAT DRASTIC EVENTS AWAIT BREZHNEV JUST AROUND THE CORNER, AS SOME OF OUR COLLEAGUES - PARTICULARLY THE BRITISH -- ARE INCLINED TO BELIEVE. NEVERTHELESS, THE INTERACTION OF INTERNAL SECURITY, FOREIGN POLICY AND LEADERSHIP JOSTLING IS CRUCIAL TO THE FUTURE OF THIS REGIME AND ITS BEHAVIOR.

4. EFFECT OF DISSIDENCE ON INTERNAL SECURITY.

A. EMBASSY SUBSCRIBES TO CONVENTIONAL WISDOM THAT RUSSIAN POPULATION IS UNLIKELY TO BE DEEPLY AGITATED BY ANYTHING SHORT OF MAJOR FOOD CRISIS OR THREAT OF WAR, AND THAT THERE IS NOT PROSPECT FOR UNREST BASED ON HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUES. WHILE THERE MAY BE A LONG-TERM POTENTIAL FOR DISAFFECTION AMONG NATIONAL AND RELIGIOUS MINORITIES, CONFIDENTIAL

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THERE SEEMS TO BE NO LINK WITH RUSSIAN DISSIDENCE EXCEPT FOR OCCASIONAL CONFLUENCE OF ACTIVITIES OF DISSIDENTS AND EMIGRATION-ORIENTED JEWS.

B. THERE MAY BE SOME GROUND FOR REGIME CONCERN BECAUSE OF HYDRA-LIKE PERSISTENCE OF SMALL BAND OF DISSIDENTS. REMNANTS OF THE TAKIR-KRASIN GROUP RECENTLY ISSUED ANOTHER STATEMENT TO THE WESTERN PRESS, SOME FORMER POLICIAL PRISONERS HAVE JUST SENT AN APPEAL TO CSCE, AND REPEATED CONTACTS OF SAKHAROV AND SOLZHENITSYN WITH FOREIGN JOURNALISTS HAVE KEPT THE WORLD SPOTLIGHT ON HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUES IN THE SOVIET UNION. FURTHER MORE, THE GAUNTLET THROWN DOWN BY SAKHAROV POSES A PARTICULARLY DELICATE PROBLEM FOR THE REGIME: IF HE IS PUNISHED, THERE COULD BE EXTENSIVE FOREIGN POLICY

REVERBERATIONS; IF HE GOES UNPUNISHED, INTELLECTUALS IN AND ON THE FRINGES OF THE ESTABLISHMENT -- SOME OF WHOM REFUSED TO SIGN THE INITIAL FLURRY OF PUBLIC ATTACKS AGAINST HIM -- COULD BE ENCOURAGED TO ACT MORE INDEPENDENTLY.

C. ON BALANCES, HOWEVER, IT SEEMS CLEAR THAT POLITICAL DISSIDENCE IN THE USSR DOES NOT PRESENT A MAJOR PROBLEM OF INTERNAL SECURITY AT THE PRESENT TIME.

5. LEADERSHIP PERCEPTIONS OF THE PROBLEM.

SOVIET LEADERS, HOWEVER, MAY PERCEIVE THE PROBLEM DIFFERENTLY. EMBASSY SUSPECTS THERE ARE DIFFERENCES WITHIN THE LEADERSHIP ON THIS SCORE, BUT FOLLOWING ANALYSIS IS LARGELY SPECULATIVE.

A. EACH MEMBER OF HIGH LEADERSHIP STILL SEEMS TO SUFFER IN SOME DEGREE FROM SIEGE MENTALITY AND THEREFORE IS CONDITIONED TO PLACE HIGH PRIORITY ON INTERNAL CALM.

B. AT ONE END OF LEADERSHIP SPECTRUM, DETENTE ADVOCATES MAY NOT GIVE MUCH CREDENCE TO INTERNAL THREAT, BUT RECOGNIZE THAT ANYTHING WHICH DISTURBS INTERNAL CALM GIVES AMMUNITION TO THOSE WHO ARE SKEPTICAL OF DETENTE.

C. AT OTHER END OF SPECTRUM, SOME LEADERS ARE GENUINELY FEARFUL OF INTERNAL EFFERVESCENCE (THIS INCLUDES SOME WHOSE WATCHDOG FUNCTIONS GIVE THEM A VESTED INTEREST). OTHERS MAY NOT BE WORRIED ABOUT REAL INTERNAL DANGERS BUT SEE THE THREAT THEREOF AS MEANS OF SLOWING DOWN DETENTE.

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D. IN THIS CONTEXT, YAKIR-KRASIN TRIAL COULD EASILY HAVE BEEN AGREED TO BY DETENTE ADVOCATES AS NECESSARY PRE-EMPTIVE MOVE EXPECTED TO ENSURE THE NEEDED INTERNAL CALM.

E. OFFENSIVE BY SAKHAROV (AND TO LESSER EXTENT SOLZHENITSYN) AND ITS IMPACT IN WEST MAY NOT HAVE BEEN FULLY ANTICIPATED BY DETENTE ADVOCATES. IT MAY HAVE BEEN HOPED FOR -- POSSIBLY EVEN FACILITATED -- BY DETENTE SKEPTICS. PRESS CAMPAIGN AGAINST SAKHAROV, WHICH DID EVEN MORE TO STIR UP WESTERN INDIGNATION THAN DID SAKHAROV'S ORIGINAL STATEMENTS, OBVIOUSLY SERVED THE INTERESTS OF DETENTE SKEPTICS. THIS PRESUMABLY IS WHY THE CAMPAIGN WAS SUDDENTLY DECELERATED.

F. EMBASSY BELIEVES THAT ONE OF KEYS TO PRESENT REGIME ATTITUDES ON DETENTE LIES IN BREZHNEV'S AUGUST 15 ALMA ATA SPEECH, WHICH CONTAINED WHAT WE HAVE TERMED THE "VICTORY THROUGH CONTACTS" THEME. CONTEMPLATING WITH EQUANIMITY A COMPETITION OF IDEAS, HE ALSO NEATLY PUT THE MONKEY ON THE PROPAGANDISTS' BACKS BY ASSERTING THAT IT IS UP TO THEM TO DO A BETTER JOB OF ARGUING THE CASE FOR COMMUNIST IDEAS. WE JUDGE THAT BREZHNEV GROUP SAW THE NECESSITY FOR PERMITTING GREATER CONTACTS --

NOT ONLY AS THE PRICE OF DETENTE, BUT ALSO AS A POSTIVE BENEFIT IN INFUSING NEW SCIENTIFIC IDEAS AND IN RAISING SOVIET PRESTIGE AS SELF-CONFIDENT SUPERPOWER. THE ALAM ATA LINE NOT ONLY PROVIDED IDEOLOGICAL JUSTIFICATION BUT ALSO PUT THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR PROPERLY CARRYING IT OUT ON THE PROPAGANDISTS AND IDEOLOGUE.

G. AT FIRST, SOME PROPAGANDISTS MERELY IGNORED THE ALMA ATA LINE. LATER, HAVING PROBABLY BEEN GIVEN DIRECTIVES TO PUBLICIZE IT, THEY HEMMED IT IN WITH QUALIFICATIONS. THEY SEEMD TO BE TRYING TO WRIGGLE OFF THE HOOK.

H. MEANWHILE, THE REGIME WAS DECIDING ON AN ACTION WHICH WOULD SPEAK LOUDER THAN PROPAGANDISTS' WARNINGS ABOUT THE SUBVERSIVE CHARACTER OF WESTERN IDEAS: CESSATION OF JAMMING VOA, BBC AND DEUTSCHE WELLE.

I. THE DECISION TO SHUT DOWN SOME JAMMERS, WHILE PROBABLY IN THE WORKS FOR SOME TIME IN CONNECTION WITH SECOND PHASE OF CSCE, ALSO FITS WITH SOME PECULIARITIES OF THE HANDLING OF THE YAKIR-KRASIN-SAKHAROV-SOLZHENITSYN
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AFFAIR: INSTEAD OF MIMIMIZING INTERNAL PUBLICITY ABOUT THE AFFAIR, THE REGIME REVEALED MUCH MORE ABOUT THE PRINCIPALS' VIEWS AND ACTIVITIES THAN SEEMED TO BE NECESSARY. AND SOVIET OFFICIALS IN MOSCOW, AS WELL AS ABROAD, WERE WILLING -- EVEN ANXIOUS -- TO TALK ABOUT IT. THIS MAY MEAN THAT THE REGIME IS GETTING THE MESSAGE THAT IT MUST AT LEAST ACT MORE SELF-CONFIDENT ABOUT ITS INTERNAL PROBLEMS.

6. PROSPECTS.

A. EMBASSY BELIEVES THAT BREZHNEV IS IN FIRM CONTROL, REMAINS COMMITTED TO DETENTE POLICY, AND IS PREPARED CAUTIOUSLY TO OPEN UP SOVIET UNION IN SLOW STAGES TO WESTERN CONTACTS AND INFORMATION. ACTIVE POLITICAL DISSIDENCE IS A DIFFERENT MATTER: HIS OWN INCLINATIONS, AS WELL AS THE NATURE OF HIS POLITICAL PROBLEMS WITHIN THE LEADERSHIP, PROPEL HIM TOWARD STRONG MEASURES. BUT THE EXPEDIENCY OF DETENTE ARGUES THAT NO ACTION BE TAKEN AGAIN

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